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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6250

September 12, 2003

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

In a recent report, GAO evaluated progress made by the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP) in addressing the threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism by installing radiation detection equipment at U.S. ports of entry. Installing such equipment at our borders is a critical component in reducing the Nation's vulnerability to terrorism. In addition, a number of other federal agencies are engaged in projects to install radiation detection equipment at key transportation points within and outside the United States. In particular:

- ✧ Since 1997, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Second Line of Defense (SLD) program has been working to install radiation detection equipment to screen cargo, vehicles, and passengers at Russian border crossings. GAO reported in 2002 that the program had completed the installation of equipment at the first 8 of close to 60 border crossings in Russia (*Nuclear Nonproliferation: U.S. Efforts to Help Other Countries Combat Nuclear Smuggling Need Strengthened Coordination and Planning*, GAO-02-426). Since the GAO report, the SLD program has expanded to include other countries such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan and has taken on responsibility for maintaining radiation detection equipment deployment by the State Department to 19 other countries.

- ✧ NNSA is also beginning to deploy radiation detection equipment at "foreign mega seaports" that account for a large proportion of the sea cargo shipped to the U.S. ports. This project supports BCBP's Container Security Initiative, in which BCBP inspectors stationed at foreign seaports work with foreign customs officials to identify and examine high-risk containers prior to their arrival at U.S. ports. NNSA recently received $84 million to deploy radiation detection equipment in support of this effort.

- ✧ Other agencies are supporting a number of projects to test radiation detection equipment at key transportation points within the United States. For example, a pilot project in New York is using funding from the Department of

Homeland Security (DHS) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to set up test beds for radiation detection equipment in the greater New York area. Similarly, the Department of Energy has funded Oak Ridge National Laboratory to test radiation detection equipment at a truck weigh station.

- ✧ The Department of Defense (DOD) has provided assistance to combat nuclear smuggling to several countries in the former Soviet Union under two programs – the Cooperative Threat Reduction program and the International Counter Proliferation Program. DOD is currently installing radiation detection portal monitors in at least one of these countries.

We request that GAO review the status and implementation of these efforts to install radiation detection equipment at key transportation points within and outside the United States. Specifically, we would like GAO to address the following questions:

(1) What progress has the SLD program made in installing radiation detection equipment at borders crossings in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan? How is NNSA ensuring the sustainability of the equipment at these border crossings, and what, if any, agreements does NNSA have with other countries to receive operational data on "hits" from the equipment deployed to these countries?

(2) What is the status of maintaining or replacing equipment previously provided by the State Department to other countries?

(3) What is the status of reaching agreements with foreign mega seaports to install radiation detection equipment and what progress has been made in actually installing the equipment?

(4) What are NNSA's estimated total costs and timeframes for the SLD program and the installation of radiation detection equipment at mega seaports in support of BCBP's Container Security Initiative?

(5) What is the status of testing radiation detection equipment at key points in the transportation infrastructure within the United States? What is the status of the deployment of radiation equipment at ports of entry (e.g. maritime ports, border crossings, airports, international mail facilities, and express consignment courier facilities) into the U.S.?

(6) In the context of testing and deploying radiation detection devices at various points of entry into the U.S. (e.g. maritime ports, border crossings, airports, international mail facilities, and express consignment courier facilities), what is the level of cooperation between the DHS, Department of Energy, BCBP, TSA, and NNSA?

(7) In the context of testing and deploying radiation detection devices outside of the U.S., what is the level of cooperation between the DHS, DOD, Department of Energy, BCBP, State Department, and NNSA?

Because of the scope of this request, we understand that it could be divided into two engagements, one focusing on NNSA efforts to install and maintain radiation detection equipment in Russia and other countries, and the other focusing on efforts to deploy equipment within the United States.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Ray Shepherd, Staff Director of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, at (202) 224-3721; Laura Stuber, Minority Counsel of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, at (202) 224-9505; Jason Foster, Senior Counsel of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, at (202) 224-4751; or Chris Knauer, Minority Investigator of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, at (202) 225-6563. Thank you in advance for your prompt response to this request.

Sincerely,

Norm Coleman
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

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Ranking Minority Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
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